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Peacebuilding Commission

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Peacebuilding Commission
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Summary record of the 4th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 12 December 2006, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Løvald ..... (Norway)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

Peacebuilding in Burundi (*continued*)

Identifying the gaps (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Da Silva** (Brazil) said that various areas, such as political reconciliation, security and development, should be tackled in parallel, so that they would reinforce each other. Burundi should not become merely a collection of development programmes. A workplan which reflected the priorities of the Burundians themselves was necessary. Such a plan should have as its main priorities the functioning of the main State institutions, poverty eradication and basic services to the population. Reform of the justice sector must be carried out in conjunction with the reform of other areas, such as the security and police forces and the corrections sector.

2. **Mr. Ayebare** (Uganda) said that one way of improving the working methods of the Peacebuilding Commission would be to hold more expert meetings prior to the country-specific meetings. Furthermore, the Peacebuilding Commission should support the priorities identified by the Government of Burundi itself. One such priority was enhanced security.

3. Uganda had been involved in the talks between the Government and the Parti pour la libération du peuple Hutu-Forces nationales de libération (PALIPEHUTU-FNL) which led to the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement and was working hard to ensure that the Agreement was implemented. Together with South Africa, it was currently trying to secure a meeting with Burundi on the sidelines of the upcoming Great Lakes Conference to try to address the concerns of PALIPEHUTU-FNL with regard to immunity for its members, which was provided for under the Agreement. Assurances on that score could encourage leaders of that movement to return to Burundi.

4. Burundi had recently joined the East African Community. The move was an important institutional and peacebuilding landmark as it meant that the country's Parliament and court system would have to be harmonized with that of the Community.

5. **Mr. Kamana** (Burundi), responding to questions, said that one of the main concerns appeared to be whether Burundi should have submitted a plan of action. Following the recommendations of the October meeting, his Government had met with international and civil society partners; the fruit of those meetings was the submission of a document containing draft projects on priorities which had been submitted to the Commission. Should those draft projects be acceptable to the Commission, he would meet with Burundi's partners in Bujumbura to set up a timetable for their implementation.

6. In the context of peacebuilding, the purpose of the budgetary support sought by Burundi was to help prevent weekly strikes by civil servants. If civil servants went on strike regularly and if the police and security services joined in the fray, the resulting upheaval would adversely affect democracy. Civil society and the Government were in agreement on human rights issues and on the need to strengthen the justice system. Had serious human rights violations been committed in any prisons, they would have been denounced by the representative of civil society. Allegations concerning the imprisonment of a representative from the Anti-Corruption Agency for speaking out were unfounded. In fact, 11 December had been declared Anti-Corruption Day, and it had been a day of reflection among members of the Government, including members of the Ministry for Good Governance, and the Agency.

7. The Palais de justice (law courts) in Bujumbura suffered from a shortage of courtrooms. Since each of the four courts had over 1,000 cases on its docket, it was impossible to give all the accused a public hearing. The Government was working hard to make sure that preventive detention was the exception, not the rule. He therefore hoped that he would be able to return to Bujumbura with an envelope.

8. **Mr. Malhotra** (India) said that the Peacebuilding Commission must help Burundi, and that it should do so sooner rather than later. Burundi had provided all of the information, national plans, programmes and priorities requested of it. The situation in the country was difficult. Therefore, the comment in the Chairperson's Summary, that "a country envelope would be made available in early 2007, subject to the conversion of donor pledges into cash contributions" should be amended. Early 2007 was not sufficiently specific.

9. **The Chairperson** said that since the fund was already available for disbursement, the language in the Chairperson's Summary should be re-examined.

10. **Mr. Cabral** (Guinea-Bissau) said that while there were certain systematic shortcomings, to which the Minister had referred, the Government of Burundi regarded tackling those problems as a priority. The Minister was speaking the truth and was not trying to conceal problems. The Minister, civil society and citizens saw eye to eye. He agreed with the representative of India that the Commission must act quickly to help Burundi. For example, the provision of assistance with respect to the payment of civil service salaries was consistent with the Commission's mandate.

11. **Mr. Mahmoud** (Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Burundi) said he was delighted that the mapping document was appreciated. He would welcome any additional information to improve it. Burundi had developed many strategies, including a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, a common action plan, an emergency plan and an action plan which had been submitted directly to the Peacebuilding Fund for immediate peace consolidation activities. The latter plan was with the Peacebuilding Support Office. By the end of January, an action plan would be finalized which contained contributions from the Government, donors and the United Nations detailing actions for the next two years. The elements not financed by the Peacebuilding Fund would all be integrated into a single follow-up action plan.

12. The Government was working hard to translate the medium- to long-term goals of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper into a sectoral plan. In a post-conflict situation, there was a huge capacity deficit. There was no way the international community could do everything for the Government, which needed time to own everything that it presented to the Commission. He begged the Commission not to burden the Government of Burundi further. By the next meeting of the Commission a joint action plan would be ready. It would combine socio-economic elements and those mandated by the Security Council.

13. **The Chairperson** said that the representative of the World Bank had asked to participate in consideration of the item.

14. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Sow (World Bank) took a place at the Committee table.*

15. **Mr. Sow** (World Bank) said that the key in defining projects for Burundi was speed. Budget support was crucial for the next year or two in order to avoid the risk of economic collapse. Economic collapse would mean that Burundi would be unable to reach the completion point of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, which in turn boded ill for its medium-term prospects.

16. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt) asked why the action plan had gone directly to the Peacebuilding Fund without going to the Commission first. He could not accept the document to be adopted by the meeting. Concrete action was needed to address the needs of the people of Burundi. He was officially against adopting the Chairperson's summary and requested that the meeting should be suspended for consultations.

17. **Mr. Gasper Martins** (Angola) said that the country-specific meeting should receive information regarding the status of the Peacebuilding Fund for use in addressing the urgent assistance needs of Burundi. If the Commission had a clear idea of the resources available to it, then it should give a much clearer response to the request for assistance than what currently figured in the Chairperson's summary, which should be amended. The objection just raised by Egypt should be considered further.

18. **Mr. Muñoz** (Chile) said that the private sector had an important role to play during the transition period. Microenterprises and small enterprises should be a priority as they had a large labour absorption capacity, if given the right support. He wondered whether they could be included among the priorities. Echoing the statements made by India and Guinea-Bissau, he said that assistance should be provided to Burundi immediately, given the urgent situation in which the country found itself. The Peacebuilding Commission's role should not be confined only to providing emergency aid, since it had been designed to play a long-term role. Furthermore, the Fund was intended to have a catalysing effect on the peace consolidation process, so action should be taken before peace was threatened. Given the foregoing, a political approach should be adopted in addressing the country's pressing needs.

Marshalling resources

19. **Ms. McAskie** (Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support) said that it was important to distinguish between the resource mobilization and strategic requirements of the Commission and the requirements of the Peacebuilding Fund. However, the

Fund should operate within the framework established by the Commission. There were two separate administrative mechanisms for the Fund, namely arrangements on the ground in Burundi and Sierra Leone and arrangements at Headquarters, where contributions were received and disbursed. Progress had been made in both areas.

20. The priority plan for the Fund had not been distributed to the Commission because it had only been received in early December 2006. However, it should be possible to circulate that plan to the Commission with the agreement of members of the Commission and members of the Fund. The next step should be to undertake a review of the priority plan and to approve an envelope containing the total funds to be made available to the Government. Even though the priority plan had been received in early December 2006, it should be possible to deliver a draft envelope in the region of $25 million on an urgent basis. It was important to note that the Fund operated in terms of cash and not in terms of pledges. The necessary administrative arrangements to convert pledges into cash had been established.

21. The Fund should address key peacebuilding issues in Burundi but did not have the scope to address all the challenges facing the Government. Additional bilateral and multilateral support would be necessary in the long term. The Commission had overall responsibility for peacebuilding issues. It was essential that the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) should take into account the discussions of the Commission, with a view to coordinating the disbursement of funds to the Government. Under the terms of reference of the Fund, the expenditures should be targeted at projects agreed by the Government and United Nations agencies, with the provision that it should be possible to involve other actors, including the private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil society.

22. **The Chairperson** said that the representative of the International Monetary Fund had asked to participate in consideration of the item.

23. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Mathieu (International Monetary Fund) took a place at the Committee table.*

24. **Mr. Mathieu** (International Monetary Fund) said that an International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission had returned from Burundi, where it had concluded discussions on the fifth review under the macroeconomic and structural reform programme supported by a Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) arrangement. In February 2007, the Executive Board should consider completion of the fifth review. A residual budget financing gap of about $15 million for 2007 remained to be filled. In a difficult post-conflict environment, Burundi had continued to make progress in 2006 on its macroeconomic reform effort, with real GDP growth of about 5 per cent and inflation in the low single digits. All quantitative performance targets at end-June and end-September 2006 had been met. It was also expected that the end-December targets should be met.

25. Macroeconomic policy implementation had been severely affected by long delays in the disbursement of expected external budget support. Faced with the external financing shortfall, the authorities had cut non-wage primary expenditure by over 3 per cent of GDP, thus limiting domestic bank financing to well below programme limits. The Government had demonstrated considerable fiscal discipline in the face of high public expectations of a peace dividend. Although structural reforms had been delayed due to political tensions in mid-2006, the easing of tensions and the appointment of a new ministerial team had facilitated the reform process. The outlook for 2007 was for slightly higher growth and continued low inflation. The 2007 budget included a rise in revenue to 20 per cent of GDP, supported by IMF technical assistance. The share of social spending would increase further in 2007. The continued rise in the wage bill to about 12 per cent of GDP in 2007 was cause for concern. Priority measures to reinforce wage bill management were being implemented with IMF and World Bank technical support.

26. The authorities were committed to establishing a close partnership with donors and were conscious of the need to work together with a view to strengthening public financial management and governance. The partnership framework of donors and international financial institutions had been reactivated, and IMF was providing the necessary support. The 2007 programme included an important structural component for capacity-building and established the conditions for sustained private-sector led growth. Measures included steps to relaunch the privatization programme, strengthen good governance and transparency, rehabilitate national statistics and

strengthen monetary policy and supervise the banking sector.

27. **Mr. Ahmad** (Pakistan) said that the priority plan submitted to the Fund should be made available to members of the Commission, which was also responsible for addressing the priorities and gaps that had been identified by the Government.

28. **The Chairperson** noted that the statement made by the Minister of Good Governance represented an important tool for addressing the priorities and gaps.

29. **Mr. Malhotra** (India) said that the timely disbursement of funds was more important than the conversion of pledges into cash. Under the terms of reference of the Fund, a peer review should be carried out to enable the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support to determine the level of funding for Burundi in the context of the requirements of other States. He called on the Assistant Secretary-General to carry out the peer review and to make funds available to the Government on an urgent basis. A response was urgently required because the Government had provided fully satisfactory responses to the Commission's requests. The Chairperson's summary should convey the necessity of providing funds on an urgent basis.

30. **Mr. Wolfe** (Jamaica) said that informal consultations were necessary to redraft the Chairperson's summary. Urgent action was required in the form of external budgetary assistance.

31. **The Chairperson** said that the representative of the European Community had asked to participate in consideration of the item.

32. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Valenzuela (European Community) took a place at the Committee table.*

33. **Mr. Valenzuela** (European Community) said that it was important to refine the mapping exercise because additional information was required. Short term indicators were significant but a long-term peacebuilding strategy was crucial for mobilizing donor efforts.

The meeting was suspended at 4.50 p.m. and resumed at 5 p.m.

34. **Mr. Kamana** (Burundi) said that his Government had taken appropriate action following the end of the conflict. It was clear that the Commission was not responsible for solving all the problems; its work should serve as a catalyst. However, his delegation hoped that funds to address the shortfall would be made available before the round table.

35. **The Chairperson** suggested that PBSO should rewrite the Chairperson's summary, which should be circulated on 13 December 2006. The revised summary should be submitted to the Minister of Good Governance before he returned to Burundi.

36. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.